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CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE IN FULL 1998

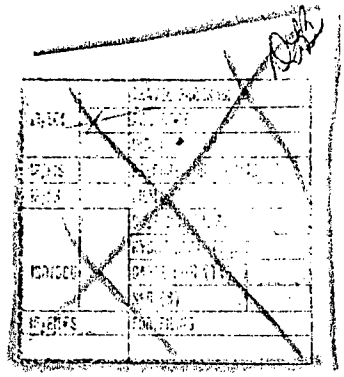
~~EX 10922~~

18 SEP 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: ~~Chief, CI Staff~~

SUBJECT : Allegations of Lee Harvey OSWALD's Connection with the Agency

REFERENCE : Memorandum of Conversation, Dan Rather/Les Midgley and the DCI, Dated 6 September 1975



1. The referent memorandum contains two points which require comments. The first point concerns allegations that were made shortly after the assassination of President Kennedy and that have crept up every so often since then. In one form or another, the allegations are that Lee Harvey OSWALD had been connected with the Agency. The allegations are totally unfounded.

2. The facts regarding this matter are as follows:

a. On 27 November 1963 I was instructed by Mr. ~~R.G.Rocca~~, my immediate superior at that time, to make a thorough check within the Agency at Headquarters to determine whether Lee Harvey OSWALD had ever been used by the Agency or been connected with it in any conceivable way. He ordered me to make the checks directly and personally to the degree possible and not to accept statements of intermediaries. He also explained that he was following instructions from Mr. R. Helms, who was then the DDP and served as one of the Agency's key contact officials with the Warren Commission.

b. Although I had already checked the Main Index of ~~IP (then RID)~~ on the night of the assassination, I rechecked the Main Index and found no record beyond that which I had already obtained before (plus those items which had been integrated into the records system since the assassination). There was nothing in the DDO records which indicated any Agency connection with OSWALD.

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c. The next component I checked was DCD. There was no record in their Headquarters files. Arrangements were then made for me to check telephonically with each DCD base in the US. The chiefs of the bases then serached their records and spoke with their officers. I was then advised by each of the chiefs or their designees individually that there had been no contact with OSWALD.

d. I then checked with Division D, SE Division, and LA Division's Cuban Operations Group (COG) for any informal desk records. The results were likewise negative.

e. Through the Security Research Section (SRS) of the Office of Security I had the security files checked. There was no record of OSWALD.

f. Although CRS keeps no records on Americans, I checked their Soviet, Mexican, and Cuban holdings on the remote chance that they may have recorded something on OSWALD. There was no record in those files.

g. In my presence the chief of the CI Staff's Administrative Office called the Office of Personnel and received the word that there was no record on an employee or an applicant for employment named Lee Harvey OSWALD.

h. I also checked the Office of Medical Services and found no record on OSWALD.

i. The Covert Action Staff also found no record on him.

j. Finally, I also checked the records of the CI Staff's Operational Approval Group (CI/OA) with negative results.

k. My checks were completed on 4 December 1963 and I then sent a brief informal note to Mr. Rocca

specifying all the checks I had made and stating that the results showed that Lee Harvey OSWALD had never had any connection whatsoever with the Agency. Eventually a statement to this effect was communicated to the Warren Commission.

3. Similar checks regarding use or employment of OSWALD had been requested by the foreign divisions of their appropriate stations, I was told, and the results were negative.

4. I recall very clearly that we were extremely concerned at the time that OSWALD, as an American returning from the USSR, might have been routinely debriefed by DCD, thus having established contact with the Agency. The same point has now, quite understandably, been made by the two CBS newsmen. Having some knowledge of this subject I have personally concluded that there is valid reason for DCD's lack of interest in OSWALD at that time. He would surely have been contacted and debriefed by DCD had he been to the USSR and returned to the US before 1957/1958. Travel to the Soviet Union by Westerners, particularly by Americans, before that time was quite uncommon and we were hungry for eyewitness information in those days. The thaw began in about 1956 and by the end of that decade there were so many persons travelling to and from the Soviet Union that DCD was incapable of talking to all of them. Therefore, a program of selectivity and specific target applicability was instituted. In light of the above, it seems to me that OSWALD-- if he came to DCD's attention at all--would have easily been by-passed, because he simply did not possess the type of information that DCD was seeking at that time. DCD would surely have used its limited manpower on travellers who had had much greater access in the USSR.

5. It should be added that my above-described search in the Agency file holding produced no record or indication that any other US Government agency had used him as a source or had considered him for recruitment.

6. The second point in the referent memorandum concerns the papers that were available at Headquarters on Oswald before the day of the assassination. Specifically, there were five documents which had been sent to the Agency before the assassination. Two of the documents had been sent to us by the FBI, two by the Department of State, and one by the US Navy. A 201 file (201-289248) had been opened on 9 December 1960 on the basis of the receipt of the first of these five documents. The 201 file contained no records that had been originated by any Agency component. The Mexico City station's reporting of the monitoring of Oswald's activities in Mexico had not as yet been included in the 201 file. The pertinent cables from Mexico City were held at the Mexico branch at Headquarters, while the data contained in them had been disseminated to the FBI upon receipt. The cables were incorporated into the file following the assassination - and were, of course, made available to all concerned, including the Warren Commission.

7. It should be noted that no particularly great urgency was attached to the handling of the records regarding Oswald before the assassination because Oswald's name had no particular meaning before that fateful event.

8. The facts regarding the records we possessed before the assassination as well as the make up of our computerized records system were explained to Chief Justice Warren, members of his Commission, and a group of the Commission's staff members when they visited Headquarters in about March 1964 for the express purpose of viewing the methods and controls we employed in our records keeping activities. Our 201 file on Oswald was also shown to them at the time. From all I have heard regarding this visit, the visitors were satisfied with our records system and the manner in which we kept our records.

Paul Hartman

DD/O 75-5018

6 September 1975

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION: Dan Rather and Les Midgley
3 September 1975

Mr. Rather said that CBS is working up a series of programs entitled, "The Assassinations," dealing with the assassinations of President Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Rev. King, and the attempt on Gov. Wallace. He said they are particularly concerned that they have the facts about any possible CIA connection with Oswald. He said that it seems also, on its face, incredible that CIA had not had some contact with an ex-Marine who worked in the Soviet Union and returned. He said he realized the difference between an interview with him and making him an agent, but wanted to make sure he had covered all the bets. He referred to the work of Mark Lane in this field and I referred to Dick Gregory's paranoia on the subject of CIA connections with the Kennedy death.

We went over a variety of matters, but I essentially firmed it up at the end by saying that CIA had no contact with Oswald either during his Russian period or afterwards, that CIA's only records of Oswald came from our becoming aware of his visits to embassies in Mexico City, which information was made available to the Warren Commission, that there is absolutely no basis for a conclusion (and some indications to the contrary) that Howard Hunt visited Mexico at the time Oswald was there, and that the Russian traveler that CIA had interviewed was indeed a different individual than Oswald, despite the coincidence of the dates of his residence in the Soviet Union. I ended by saying I was prepared to give these answers under oath, based on information available within the Agency, although I had no personal knowledge of the matter. I said I could not believe that any additional information would surface in the Agency as it had been carefully examined from 1963 on, especially by Mr. Belin in the Rockefeller Commission investigations due to his personal interest in the matter. Mr. Midgley referred to the fact that some additional information is coming out from the FBI, and I pointed out

that the Rockefeller Commission had not had a charter to look into the FBI. We discussed Allen Dulles's comments about whether an intelligence agent could ever be exposed, but we left on the final comment by Mr. Dulles that he believed Mr. Hoover's comments on this matter, which Mr. Rather said he probably would himself at that time. I said that this in no way indicated a desire by Mr. Dulles to conceal any CIA activity. Mr. Rather also said that Mr. Helms had become somewhat agitated over the Garrison allegations, and I said this was easily explained by Mr. Helms' concern that such false allegations be made against CIA. In response to Mr. Rather's question, I said I know of no indication that Mr. Helms' agitation was because Mr. Garrison was revealing information about the Agency which Mr. Helms wanted to remain concealed.

With respect to Oswald's one appearance in our records, I explained that CIA might well have shied off from any interview with him if there was an indication of prior FBI interest. As for the military, I said the Interagency Source Register did not indicate Mr. Oswald was a clandestine source and that DCS Joint Debriefing Program with the military services from 1953 on would probably have indicated any military debriefing for intelligence purposes, but none appear in our files, so I believed none had been conducted.

We parted with my assurance that anything else that arose which would cast doubt on my statements would be brought to Mr. Rather's attention. The two gentlemen expressed appreciation for our discussion.

COMMENT: From their attitude, I believe there is a chance that the program will indicate that there is no CIA connection with Oswald beyond that noted above. This could make a contribution to knocking down the paranoic belief to the contrary. We must, however, insure that Mr. Rather does learn anything which would cause the slightest doubt on the above account before he produces the programs in November.

W. E. Colby
Director

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